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(Continued.)

Rachel Finds Her Spirit.

Northward, ever northward, journeyed Rachel with the Ghost-priests; for days and weeks they journeyed, so wily were these people, and part at night, since these people dreaded the light of the sun. Sometimes she was borne alone in a litter with Nole upon the shoulders of two bearers, but more often she walked between the litters in the midst of a guard of soldiers, for now she was so strong that she never seemed to tire. She had seen the Zulus in swamps where many fell, did any sickness touch her. Also this labour of the litters had not troubled her, for the long and tormented mind, as did the touch of Nole's hand and the sound of Nole's voice. At times, however, her strength would fail, and she would swoon out into those bursts of wild laughter which had scared the Zulus. Then Edo would descend from his litter and take her in his arms, and bend his head and look into her eyes in such a fashion that she went to sleep and was borne to her home by Nole and these sleepers, she answered her questions and even talked reasonably as she had done before the people of the hut. Then she would be lifted up by her feet, and she stood upon the roof of the hut which Ishmael strove to

all that had happened to her since they parted, for though she had gathered much from them, the Zulus could not, or would not, tell her everything. In past days she had heard from Rachel the story of the murder, which had been her companion years before through that night of storm on the island in the river, and now she understood that her lady loved this Richard, and that it was because of his murder by the wild brute Iubest, that she

Yes, she was mad, and for that reason Noie rejoiced that the dwarf people were taking her to their home, where she would be safe. All the while they were able to heal her, they the great doctors. Moreover, if these priests and the Zulius would have let her go, whither else could she have gone? Noie said to herself, "I am glad, except to the white people on the coast who did not reverence the insane, as do all black folk, but would have locked me up in a cage with the dogs, and let her until she died. No, although she knew that there were dangers before them, many and great dangers, Noie rejoiced to go with them."

Also in her tender care already Rachel improved much, and Noie believed that one day she would be herself again. Only she wished that she and her lady were gone together, and that there were no priests with them and above all no Eddo. For Eddo as she knew well was jealous of her authority and would do anything to keep her from that they bore one to the other. He wished to use this crazed yet so chief-tainness who had been accepted as their ruler for their own purposes. This had been clear from the beginning, and that was why when he first heard of her he had been so angry. He had seen that Eddo Dingman, since by his magic he could foresee much of the future that was dark to Noie, whose blood was mixed and who had not all the gifts of the coast.

Moreover, the Mother of the Trees was Nole's great aunt, being the sister of her grandfather, and of course, the sister of her mother, for she had dwelt among them but a few days, and never thought to inquire of the matter. But of one thing she was sure, that the Mother of the Trees, who was named Nya, and desired that "when her tree fell" the next mother should be his servant. And indeed, when the Mother of the Trees died, it was in his mind that her lady would fill this place, and being mad, obey him in all things. He had heard, and he had touched upon her words, and even on her thoughts, for Eddo and his fellow-priests, Paul and Mana, were able to read the human heart, and knew their secrets. Also she protected Rachel from him as much as she was able, never leaving her side, and never permitting that she might be for she feared lest he should become the master of her will. Only when the fits of madness fell upon her, did she permit him to come near, and to quell them with his touch and eye, since herself she lacked this power, nor dared she call the others to her aid, for they were under the hand of Eddo.

Northward, ever northward. First they passed through the Zululand of the Inkosazana. All of these were suffering from the curse that lay upon the land because, as they believed, they had offended the Inkosazana and her people. The locusts devoured their crops and the plague ravaged their cattle, so that they were almost all dead. Only a few folk with whom she travelled, the wizards who had shown fearful things to the Inkosazana, were left. Then, at their approach, only leaving a few of their old people to prostrate themselves before the Inkosazana who dwelt in the heart of a forest, and to pray her and them to spare Spitz, and the Dream-men who dwelt with the ghosts in the heart of a forest, and to pray her and them to bring gifts of such things as were left to them.

At length all the zilfus were passed, and the party entered a country where the aborigines were of other tribes, wild, wandering tribes. But even these knew of the Ghovt-kins, and attempted nothing but to get away. They attempted nothing against Nole and her escort when she travelled through this land on her embassy to the great king. They would visit them at their camps and ask an oracle, or an interpretation of dreams, but they would not give them anything but a deadly poison, offering great gifts in return. At times Eddo and his fellow-zilfus would listen, and the others would be silent, and then they would with dew into which they gazed, telling them the pictures they saw there, though this they did not do for any purpose, but only because they had brought with them from their own country ran low, and since it could not be used for any other purpose, they kept it for their own purposes.

Next they came to a country of vast swamps, where dwelt few men and many alligators. The country was full of

uplands like to those of Natal, among which wandered pastoral herds of their herds of cattle. On these plains were multitudes of game and man lions, especially in the bush-clad slopes of the mountains, and the lion roared up here and there. These lions roared round them at night, but the Priests did not seem to be afraid, for when they saw a lion they would throw a spear placed deadly poison in the carcass, and a buck that the nomad tribes brought them as offerings, of which the lions were so fond, they would also throw some of the same deadly poison to them for a great price in cattle, as to the delivery of which cattle they gave minute directions, for they knew that the nomads were the Mothers of the Trees and her prophets.

After the plans were left behind, they reached a vast, fertile and low-lying plain, where the grass was milky and the miles, which, as Nole explained to Rachel, when she would listen, was the outer territory of the Ghost-people, for the face of the Umkulus and Great Ones, who were the men that folk to which the soldiers of their escort belonged. Of these there were many and tens of thousands who earned their living by hunting, since although they were so huge and fierce-looking, they did not fight unless they were attacked. The chiefs of this people were wise and they hid in the sides of cliffs which if need be, could be turned into impregnable fortresses, but their real ruler was the Great One of the East and he was to protect the country, of the Tree and furnish it with food, since the Tree people were dreamers who did little

[illegible]

One morning a number of these bewitched Umkulus, men, women and children, were seized by the priests, mocked them, as was their wont, and the guards, some of whom were their own relatives, sought to throw them off the cliff, and cast themselves upon the ground and burst into weeping. Rachel, who was camped near the cliff, heard the wailing and read that the guard had made for her, which they followed up and carried off. Then they all heard the sound of this lamentation, and she followed by Noie. For a space she stood contemplating their misery with grief, and then she asked why these people seemed so starved and why they wept. Noie told her that the war was the cause of the heavy loss of their krali, an enormous number of middle age, whom she pointed out to Rachel, had sought to detain her because she was the only woman left, and to make her his wife, although he knew well that she was on an embassy to the Moors of the Desert. She had escaped, but it was for this reason that the curse of which they were perishing had been laid upon him and

Now Rachel went on to where the three priests sat beneath their umbrellas dozing away the hours of sunlight, beckoning to the doomed family to follow her.

"Wake, Priests," she cried in a loud voice; and they looked up astonished, rubbing their eyes, and asked what was the matter.

"This," said Rachel. "I command you to lift the weight of your malediction off the head of these people who are suffering through this." "Thou commandest?" exclaimed Eddo astonished. "And if we will not, Beautiful One, what then?" "Then," answered Rachel. "I will lift it and set it on to your heads, and you shall perish as they are perishing. Oh! you think me mad, you priests, who are more cruel than any of the Zulus and mad I am whose Spirit wanders. Yet I tell you that new powers grow within me, though whence they come I know not, and what I say I can per-

Now they stared at her muttering together, and sending for a wooden bowl, peeped into it. Whatever it was they saw there did not please them, for at length Eddo addressed the crowd of suplicants, saying:

"The Mother of the Trees forgives; the knot she tied she looses; the tree she planted she sheds; the life she has given. Bones, put on strength; mouths receive food; eyes, forget your blindness, and feet, your wanderings. Grow fat and laugh; increase and multiply; for the curse we give you a blessing, such is the will of the Mother of the Trees."

"Nay, nay," cried Rachel, when she understood their words, "believe him not, ye starvelings. Such is the will of the Inkosazana of the Zulus, she who has lost her Spirit and another's. Travels all this weary way to find them."

Then he madly seemed to come upon her again, for she tossed her arms and her head, and her eyes were full of fits of laughter. But those whom she had redeemed heeded it not, for they knew that the great king was mad, and touched her, or even her robe, kissed the ground on which she had stood and then they turned away. The redemption they began to mend, and within a few days were changed folk. This voice came from the great king, the ruler of the confines of the desert, and she saw it with her eyes. Also the fame of the deed spread among the Unkululu people, and they were glad of the rule of the Ghost-kings, and mad or sane, from that day forward they were glad to have the great king. But Zulus had done, and like the Zulus he loved her to be a spirit. No mere woman could have done that. He had lifted off the curse of the Mother of the Trees from those upon whom it had been.

Thenceforward, Eddo, Pani, and Hana hid their judgments from Rachel, and would not utter such words as she uttered in the camp. Also when they

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ized a number of men because these
d conspired together to rebel against
the Ghost-people, and brought them on
wards their own country for a cer-
tain purpose, they forced them to act
as bearers like the others, so that Ra-
el might not guess their dream. For
w, with all their power, they also
were afraid of this white Inkosazana.
Dingaan had been afraid.

So they travelled up this endless
slope of fertile land, leaving all the
seals of the giant Umkulus behind
and, one morning at the dawn
opened upon the edge of a terrible
desert; a place of dry sand and sun-
baked rocks, that looked like the bot-
tom of a drained ocean, where noth-
ing save the fire lizards and certain
venomous snakes that basked them-
selves in the sand, all except their
hounds, and only crawled out at night.
After the people of the Umkulus this



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But it is true that they also feared Umklau, whom, because of their great size and the fierceness of their teeth, the Zulus took to be evil spirits. Each if this were so, they could not understand why they should obey a

band of grey dwarfs who lived far from them beyond the desert. Still Umkulus did them no harm, for her return Nole found them all safe and well.

But afternoon Rachel and her dwarfs plunged into the dreadful wilderness, heading straight for the ball of the sinking sun. Here, although she wished to do so, she was not allowed to walk, for four tests she must first pass. Eddo, but she could bite her, said Eddo, but

A 9 a 10

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their journey in the litter with Noie.
 they entered it, and were borne for-
 ward at a great pace, the bearers for-
 ward at a run, and being often re-
 arranged. Also many other bearers
 came with them, and on the sides of
 each of them was strapped a hide
 bag of water. Of this they soon dis-
 covered the reason, for the sand of
 the wilderness was white with salt,
 and the air also seemed to be full of salt,
 that the thirst of those who trav-
 eled there was sharp and constant,
 and if it could not be satisfied they
 died.

(To be Continued.)

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